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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
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RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1805
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0516
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1939
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0183
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON PRIORITY 0097
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SUBJECT: BURMA: ITALY SEES IMPROVEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN
ACCESS

REF: SECSTATE 59122

Classified By: A/DepPolCouns Gabriel Escobar, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to MFA Southeast Asian Office Director Alberto Vecchi June 9, urging Italy to press the Burmese regime to improve humanitarian access and halt forced relocation of cyclone victims. Vecchi, who represented Italy at the May 25 pledging conference in Rangoon, said that while many problems remained, he was surprised by the level of commitment both by the junta and ASEAN countries to improving access to regions affected by Cyclone Nargis. No visas have been refused since the pledging conference, he noted, and the Minister of Social Welfare has been granted authority to extend visas for those already in country. Vecchi said it was important to recognize we were dealing with a "psychotic," "paranoid" regime that was entirely unprepared to open the country to the outside. Given that background, Vecchi said he considered the progress to-date fairly remarkable.

12. (C) Poloff pointed out that despite some improvements, more than half of those affected by the cyclone had still received no humanitarian assistance, and that there were reports of forced relocations to storm-affected areas. Vecchi agreed that access was far from perfect, but said that it was greater than he had expected, and thought that public pressure could be counterproductive. Econoff passed reftel points to Humanitarian Assistance Director Mainardo Benardelli on June 11. He had no additional information to add.
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